

The Moremi, the Chobe and you!



You need a 4x4 to tackle the bumpy roads in Chobe National Park and Moremi Game Reserve. So when you get the opportunity, rather board a mokoro and glide across the delta's waters.

Botswana has plenty of scenic destinations, but mention Moremi and Chobe and everyone agrees: These parks represent Botswana at its wildest. This 13-day travel plan from Maun to Kasane cuts through both parks and adventure is guaranteed.

BY FRANÇOIS HAASBROEK
ADDITIONAL REPORTING **TOAST COETZER**

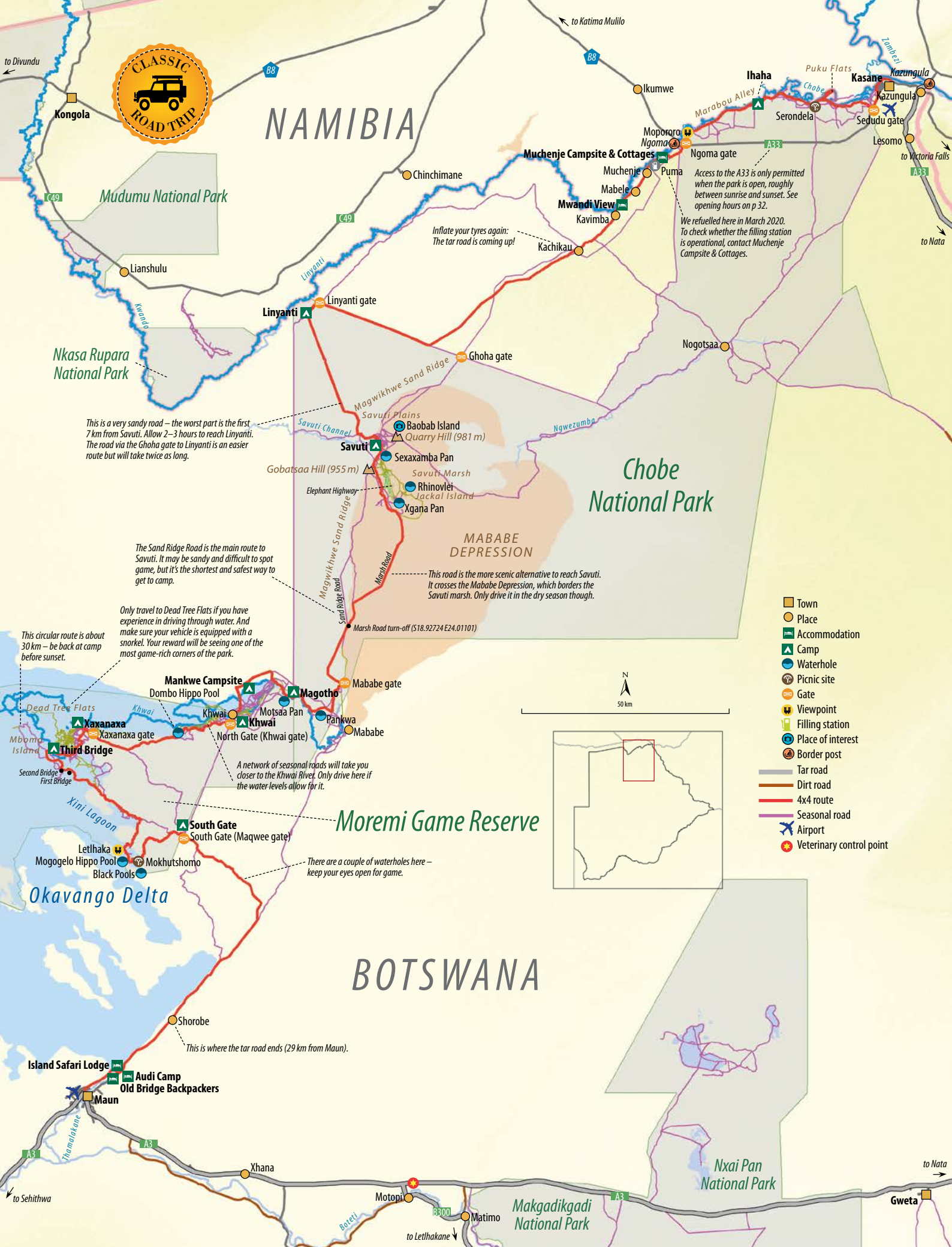


HIGHLIGHTS

MAUN
MOREMI GAME RESERVE
OKAVANGO DELTA
KHWAI RIVER
CHobe NATIONAL PARK
SAVUTI
LINYANTI MARSH
CHobe RIVER
KASANE

TAKE NOTE

Botswana was still closed to South African tourists when this magazine went to print and accommodation and activity rates listed here may change. However, the route we recommend is timeless – save this guide for 2021!



NAMIBIA

BOTSWANA

Mudumu National Park

Nkasa Rupara National Park

Chobe National Park

Moremi Game Reserve

BOTSWANA

Okavango Delta

Nxai Pan National Park

Makgadikgadi National Park

- Town
- Place
- Accommodation
- Camp
- Waterhole
- Picnic site
- Gate
- Viewpoint
- Filling station
- Place of interest
- Border post
- Tar road
- Dirt road
- 4x4 route
- Seasonal road
- Airport
- Veterinary control point

This is a very sandy road – the worst part is the first 7 km from Savuti. Allow 2–3 hours to reach Linyanti. The road via the Ghoha gate to Linyanti is an easier route but will take twice as long.

The Sand Ridge Road is the main route to Savuti. It may be sandy and difficult to spot game, but it's the shortest and safest way to get to camp.

Only travel to Dead Tree Flats if you have experience in driving through water. And make sure your vehicle is equipped with a snorkel. Your reward will be seeing one of the most game-rich corners of the park.

This circular route is about 30 km – be back at camp before sunset.

A network of seasonal roads will take you closer to the Khwai River. Only drive here if the water levels allow for it.

There are a couple of waterholes here – keep your eyes open for game.

This road is the more scenic alternative to reach Savuti. It crosses the Mababe Depression, which borders the Savuti marsh. Only drive it in the dry season though.

Inflate your tyres again: The tar road is coming up!

Access to the A33 is only permitted when the park is open, roughly between sunrise and sunset. See opening hours on p 32.

We refuelled here in March 2020. To check whether the filling station is operational, contact Muchenje Campsite & Cottages.

This is where the tar road ends (29 km from Maun).

DAY 1 Maun

If you're not put off by a long drive, you can get to Maun from Gauteng in a day, and from Cape Town in two (or three).

Rest in Maun for a day before you head into the wilderness. Compile your shopping list over breakfast at **Tshilli Farmstall**, on the corner of Sir Seretse Khama Road and Motshaba Street. Try the Full Tshilli Farmstall breakfast with a delicious iced coffee.

Maun has two **Spar supermarkets** and a **Clicks pharmacy** where you can pick up what you need. Forgot your tent in your driveway? Visit **Kalahari Kanvas** in Mathiba I Road, or the **Landmark outdoor equipment** store next to Sekgoma Road.

You'll find quality meat products at **Beef Boys Meat Market** and **Delta Meat Deli**, including crocodile and guinea fowl if you're adventurous. (You are. Try it.) Both butcheries will put together frozen meat packs for you to pick up – call a week in advance to place your order. You can also order fresh fruit and veggies.

Have lunch at **Marc's Eatery** and order a meatball sandwich (P60) or a venison burger (P80). Enjoy it because you'll be cooking for yourself for the next few days – the next restaurant you'll see will be in Kasane.

Camp at **Island Safari Lodge** next to the Thamalakane River on the northern side of town. There are power points, clean ablution blocks with hot water, and even a restaurant. When you sit in your camping chair and stare out over the river, braying donkeys and barking dogs will remind you that you're in town. The nearby bar might even host an ABBA night and Debonairs will deliver pizzas to the campsite. From tomorrow, things will be much wilder.



Tshilli Farmstall ☎ 00 267 684 0940

Beef Boys Meat Market ☎ 00 267 686 4771

📧 beef-boys.com

Delta Meat Deli ☎ 00 267 686 1419

📧 deltadeli@yahoo.com

Marc's Eatery ☎ 00 267 684 0883; 📧 marcseatery.com



STAY HERE

Island Safari Lodge

Camping P160 per person; half-price for kids under 12; free for kids under 5. Family unit for two adults and two children P1 730 per night. ☎ 00 267 686 0300
📧 islamaun.com

The Old Bridge Backpackers

Camping P100 per adult; half-price for kids under 12. Safari tents, each with en suite bathroom, from P345 per night. ☎ 00 267 686 2406
📧 maun-backpackers.com

Audi Camp

Camping P110 per person, plus P80 per night if you want a power point. Dome tent P240 per night for

two people. Self-catering house P2 900 for 10 people sharing. ☎ 00 267 686 0599; 📧 audisafaris.com

DO THIS

See the Okavango Delta from the sky. There are various flight operators and it's more affordable if you're a group of five. We usually use **Air Shakawe**; about R5 206 for five people. ☎ 00 267 686 3620; 📧 airshakawe.com

BOOKINGS

Three private tour operators manage all the campsites in Moremi Game Reserve and Chobe National Park. Be patient when booking – they often take a while to get back to you.

• **SKL Camps** manages **Savuti**, **Linyanti** and **Khwai**.

Camping R250 per adult; R125 per child aged 8–17; R60 per child aged 5–7; free for younger children.

☎ 00 267 686 5365; 📧 sklamps.com

• **Kwalate Safaris** manages **Xaxanaxa**, **South Gate** and **Ihaha**.

Camping P185 per adult; P98 per child aged 6–17.

☎ 00 267 686 1448; 📧 kwalatesafaris.com

• **Xomae Group** manages **Third Bridge**. Camping US\$30 per adult; half-price for children aged 8–17.

☎ 00 267 686 2221; 📧 xomaesites.com

You can pay with your credit card via the Xomae Group website, but SKL Camps and Kwalate Safaris only accept EFT payments to a Botswana bank account, and you may have to pay additional bank fees.

If doing it yourself seems too tedious, contact Louis Milne at **Swampland Safari Trails**. He's based in Maun and will make the bookings for you with a small surcharge added. ☎ 00 267 71 23 4300; 📧 swampland-safari.com

Cam's Corner, a sharp bend in the Khwai River near Magotho Camp, is a popular place for elephants and other game to come drink.





Of the four pole bridges in Moremi, Third Bridge is the longest (and most stable). Ask at the gate about the condition of the bridges – the camp is just on the other side of Third Bridge and if it's not accessible you'll have to drive a detour.

PARK FEES

Moremi Game Reserve and Chobe National Park have the same park fees. South Africans pay P120 per adult; half-price for children aged 8–17; P50 per vehicle per day.

Make sure you have cash because there are no card facilities. Gate times at both parks are 6 am to 6.30 pm from April to September, and 5 am to 7 pm from October to March. (The same times apply to the A33 road between the Ngoma border post and Kasane, because it runs through Chobe National Park.)

DAY 2

Third Bridge

Get up early – we're going to Moremi! Follow the road north towards the village of Mababe. After about 49 km, turn left to Moremi Game Reserve.

Report to **South Gate** (also known as the Maqwee gate) and ask about the condition of the bridges and water crossings.

Lower your tyre pressure because the roads in Moremi are sandy. The reserve is known for its water crossings and it's the only place where you can explore relatively deep into the Okavango Delta in your vehicle. The delta is fed by the Okavango River, which originates in Angola. The water level depends on rainfall in Angola, and the time of year. Many seasonal roads are inaccessible when the flood waters reach the delta. Don't take any chances and stick to the dry roads.

About 4 km from the gate, turn left off the main road and head to **Mokhutshomo picnic site** for lunch.

You've mostly driven through grassland to get here (look for leopards), but when you leave the picnic site you'll venture close to the Okavango Delta for the first time.

Pull over at the **Mogogelo Hippo Pool** or **Letlhaka viewpoint** before the road joins up with the main road again. Look for hippos in the pools if there's water, or fish-eagles hunting for easy prey in the mud when it's dry.

Turn left when you reach the main road and drive 36 km to **Third Bridge camp**. Prepare for your first water crossing, as well as First Bridge and Second Bridge – two pole bridges over deeper channels.

Third Bridge has big camping stands under trees. When

you've set up camp, light your fire and look out over the lagoon, or go look for animals at **Mbomo Island**.

The camps in Moremi and Chobe are unfenced. Honey badger, elephant, hyena and even lion sightings are the norm, not the exception. One night, I almost lost a toe to a hyena at South Gate camp. I stubbed my toe on a rock on my way to the bathroom. Later in the evening, I was standing next to my vehicle when I felt a hot gust of air on my foot – a hyena was sniffing my toe! Be careful and wear shoes.



STAY HERE

If Third Bridge is fully booked, stay at South Gate outside the park.

Third Bridge is managed by Xomae Group; see the sidebar on page 31.

South Gate is managed by Kwalate Safaris; see the sidebar on page 31.

DAY 3

Xaxanaxa

Have breakfast, pack up camp and drive to **Xaxanaxa**, 17 km away. There's a web of small roads to explore along the way. If you're towing a bush trailer, rather go straight there on the main road, set up camp at Xaxanaxa, then head back to explore the smaller roads.

I'm sure you've heard this campfire fact about the Okavango: It's huge, about the size of Swaziland. But when you're actually there, the sense of scale is hard to grasp. Rather, it's the smaller things that stay with you: southern carmine bee-eaters flying next to your vehicle as they hunt for insects, or lechwe chasing each other through ankle-deep water. Drive slowly and look for animals at **Lion Den Pan** and **Maya Pan**. If you're nervous about driving on the seasonal roads, stick to the main route and pull over at **Jessie's Pools** about 5 km from Xaxanaxa.

Visit **Paradise Pools** (about 6 km east of the camp) in the late afternoon to watch animals coming to drink, or go on a boat ride. The Xaxanaxa boat station is within walking distance of your tent and the campsite is next to the Xaxanaxa Lagoon, so you'll be on open water right away. The boat rides are expensive (P1 200 per boat for two hours), but a boat can seat up to eight people. Ask your neighbours in the campsite to join your group and split the cost. Exploring the delta on a boat is magical – there are no bumpy corrugations and you can get close to beautiful birds like wattled crane, fish-eagles and saddle-billed storks. And just wait until the sun starts setting over the water...



STAY HERE

Xaxanaxa is managed by Kwalate Safaris; see the sidebar on page 31.

DAY 4&5 Khwai River

Get an early start and drive towards **North Gate** (also known as the Khwai gate), 44 km from Xaxanaxa. You'll travel through riverine forests and mopane veld, and after about 25 km you'll follow the course of the Khwai River.

Be alert, because elephants and hippos sometimes run across the road without looking left or right.

Pull over at **Dombo Hippo Pool** (GPS for turn-off: S19.19968 E23.65447). Walk around on the viewing platform or whip up bacon and eggs on the skottel.

Leave Moremi at North Gate and cross the Khwai River to the village of Khwai. There are two small shops where you can buy a packet of chips and a Coke, or even a beer. There's no fuel, though.

After 17 km on the main road from Khwai, turn right to **Magotho Camp**. The area north of the Khwai River – and this campsite – is managed by the Khwai Development Trust. You're outside the park, but lions and other animals are often seen here. The 14 stands in the campsite are far apart and not fenced. When I arrived, three wild dogs were chasing an impala through the campsite!

Magotho used to be a wilderness camp without any facilities, but there's now a small ablution block with flush toilets and a cold shower. The campsite is much quieter than those in the park – even if there are other campers, you feel as if you have the wilderness to yourself.

Once you've pitched your tent, go relax at **Cam's Corner** (GPS: S19.12551 E23.87560) and watch the sun go down over the Khwai River.

You can't visit the **Okavango Delta** and not see the waterways from a mokoro – a long, narrow boat traditionally made from a hollowed-out tree trunk. Make arrangements with Swampland Safari Trails (☎ 00 267 71 23 4300; 🌐 swampland-safari.com) to meet a poleman near the village of Khwai later – P450 per person for about two hours.

In the meantime, return to Moremi via North Gate and drive the game-viewing routes in the eastern part of the park – animals are abundant here. You'll have to pay park fees again, so another option if you want to save some moola, is to rather explore the roads near the northern bank of the Khwai River outside the park. Head to **Motsaa Pan** (about 35 km there and back) to look for animals – you might even see your tent at Magotho on the opposite riverbank.

Time for that mokoro ride. The soft swish of the pole in water is only interrupted by the chatter of waterbirds or the trumpet of an elephant. Bliss.



STAY HERE

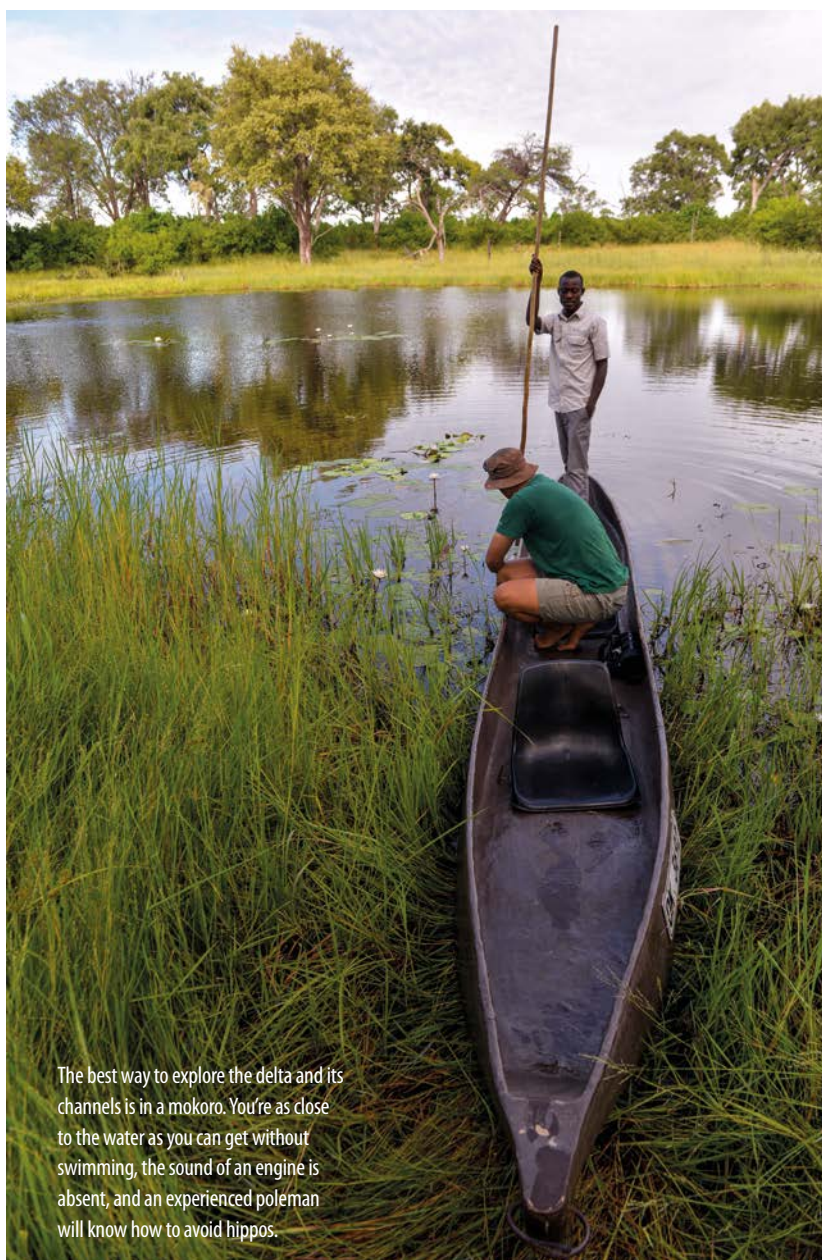
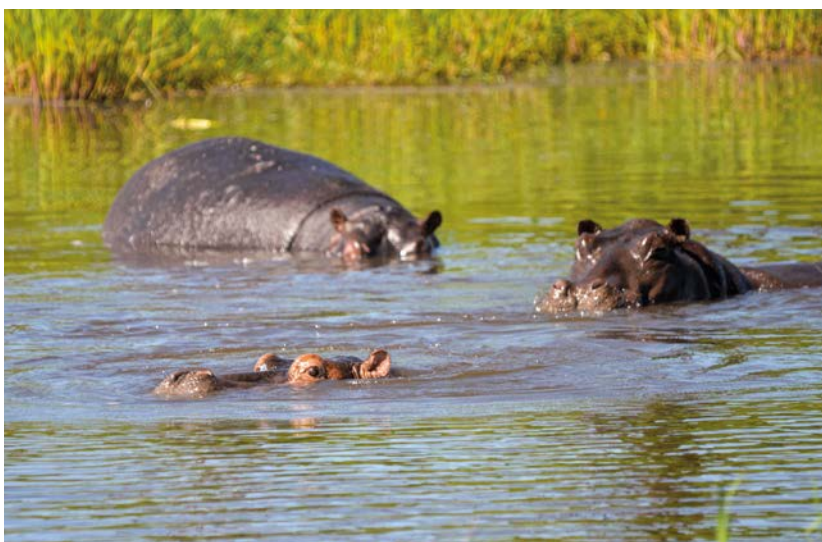
Magotho Camp

Camping P350 per adult; half-price for kids under 12. The camp is managed by the Khwai Development Trust. ☎ 00 267 680 1211; 🌐 khwaitrust.co.bw

Khwai Campsite is managed by SKL Camps; see the sidebar on page 31.

Mankwe Campsite. Camping P300 per adult; half-price for children aged 2 – 12. ☎ 079 510 2203 (WhatsApp)

🌐 wildsideafrica.net



The best way to explore the delta and its channels is in a mokoro. You're as close to the water as you can get without swimming, the sound of an engine is absent, and an experienced poleman will know how to avoid hippos.



DAY 6 Savuti

Break camp early and drive towards Savuti. Turn left at the fork back to the main road (GPS: S19.15841 E23.92154) past Pankwa waterhole. Turn right at the main road and left again after 2 km, to the Mababe gate.

You're now officially in **Chobe National Park**, but this section is known as Savuti. From the gate, it's about 45 km along the Sand Ridge Road to Savuti camp. The road is indeed sandy, with the Magwikhwe Sand Ridge to the west and open savanna to the east.

When you look at a map of Savuti, you might think there's a lot of water. With names like Savuti Channel, Savuti Lake and Savuti Marsh, it seems like you'll need a snorkel, but the waters of the Chobe River only reach this area once every few decades. You'll probably only see water at the waterholes.

Savuti is a predator's paradise. There's less water here than in the delta, which means animals are forced to drink from waterholes. Sit at a waterhole for a while and chances are you'll see a big predator like a lion.



The Sand Ridge Road to **Savuti camp** is a drive of 3–4 hours. The more scenic Marsh Road takes about five hours.

The ablution block in the camp looks like a small fort – built that way to keep elephants away from the water tanks. If possible, book stands #2, #3 or #4. They all overlook the Savuti Channel. (Stand #1 does too, but it's close to the staff quarters.) Settle in because you'll stay here for two nights.

Use the afternoon to explore the Savuti Plains north of the campsite. Cross the steel bridge to the dry Savuti Lake and Harvey's Pan.

Before you return to camp, visit **Quarry Hill**. You'll need nerves of steel to get to the top – it's a steep, rocky climb in your 4x4 – but the view from the top is worth the slog: the vastness of Chobe National Park, the hills around Savuti, and baobabs to the north. Drive to these baobabs next – it's about 2,5 km from Quarry Hill to Baobab Island.

Back in the camp, light your campfire before sunset to scare away the wild animals. Last time I camped here, a hyena carried off my wash basin. Who needs Netflix?

DAY 7 Savuti

Prepare breakfast at your tent before you get behind the wheel again. In Savuti, you can either drive through the park to see animals or wait in one spot for them to come to you. If you're not tired of driving yet, follow the Elephant Highway through the Savuti Marsh past **Xgana Pan** to **Jackal Island** and back, or just park at **Sexaxamba Pan** and wait. There's a picnic site under a big baobab near the pan where you can stretch your legs and have a sandwich.

Also drive down the Savuti Channel, but be prepared to wait if elephants want to cross the road.

Look for leopards around Twin Hills, Sable Hills and Gobatsaa Hill (also known as Leopard Rock), and animals drinking water at **Kwando Pan** near Twin Hills, at Pitsi Pans south of Gobatsaa Hill, and at the **Rhinovlei** waterhole.

For something different, stop at the sign to the east of **Bushman Painting Hill** (GPS: S18.59384 E24.07943), where you can get out and climb up the hill to see rock art. This hill is about 4 km south of camp.

Savuti is like no other place in Botswana. You'll see more animals along the Chobe River, but this place feels wilder.



STAY HERE

Savuti is managed by **SKL Camps**; see the sidebar on page 31.

DAY 8 Linyanti

When you pack up, make sure everything is securely fastened to your vehicle and lower your tyre pressure even more. Today is a tough one. Cross the steel bridge and turn left towards **Linyanti**.

First up, you'll have to cross the Magwikhwe Sand Ridge. Unlike Savuti, the Linyanti Marsh is wet. This is where one of Botswana's rivers undergoes a name change: The Linyanti River flows into the marsh and the Chobe River flows out of it.

There aren't many game-viewing routes in the area, but there are some viewpoints on the 8 km-long road along the riverbank.

Recover from the drive in the campsite for the rest of the day. Linyanti camp is in the most remote corner of Chobe National Park. There are only five stands, all on the water. Elephants and even wild dogs are often spotted in the campsite, so you won't even have to leave your chair. Enjoy the wilderness – tomorrow you head back to civilisation.



STAY HERE

Linyanti is managed by **SKL Camps**; see the sidebar on page 31.



DAY 9 Muchenje

From Linyanti, follow the road along the border of the park for about 30 km and turn left to Kachikau, where the tar road starts again. Stop and inflate your tyres. Buy a Coke at the first shop you see. (If you only drink one Coke every few years, drink it here.) Although you'll be driving through villages now, there are elephants in the area – don't speed.

Drive through Kavimba and pull over at **Kavimba Gateway** – it's said that the founders of the village camped under these baobabs many years ago. In Mabele, buy a hand-woven basket at the **Lwaavo Art and Culture Centre**.

Before you book in at **Muchenje Campsite & Cottages**, fill your tank at the new **Puma filling station** outside Muchenje.

Cool off in the swimming pool at Muchenje Campsite & Cottages, and sit on the deck overlooking the floodplain. In late summer the water might come right up to the deck; during the dry season there's barely a puddle.



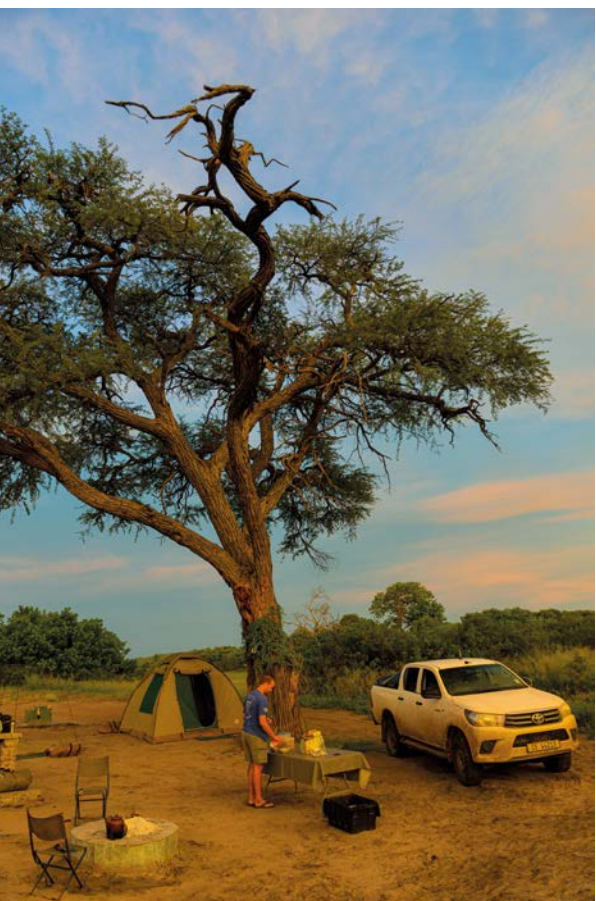
STAY HERE

Muchenje Campsite & Cottages

Camping P180 per person; self-catering cottage P970 per night for two people; self-catering tent P620 per night for two people. ☎ 00 267 75 007 327
🌐 muchenjecampsite.com

Mwandi View

Camping P190 per person; tented unit P1 300 per night for two people. ☎ 00 267 75 579 025
🌐 mwandiview.com



Above: The Chobe floodplain near Muchenje Campsite & Cottages attracts game like zebras. This part of the river falls just outside the national park so it's not unusual to see grazing wildlife among cattle.

Left: Like the other camps in Moremi and Chobe, Savuti is unfenced. Make sure your food supplies are locked away.

DAY 10

Ihaha

Your camping stand at Ihaha looks out over the Chobe River and floodplain. The river is also the border between Botswana and Namibia so don't be alarmed if army trucks drive past your tent in the middle of night – they're patrolling the border.

The section of Chobe National Park north of the A33 is known as the Chobe riverfront. Big herds of zebra, buffalo and elephant congregate around the perennial river. Predators are also common.

The roads are still sandy, but it's much easier to drive here than in Moremi or Savuti. Enter the **Ngoma gate** next to the western end of the A33 and stop at the **Mopororo viewpoint**, which overlooks the Chobe floodplain.

The main game-viewing road through this part of the park runs close to the river, but there are smaller seasonal roads that sometimes go right down to the water.

Travel through **Marabou Alley** to **Ihaha**, the only campsite in the area. The roads between Ihaha and the Sedudu gate near Kasane see more game-viewing traffic from the lodges in town. Have lunch at the **Serondela picnic site**, have a look around **Puku Flats** and return to Ihaha to set up camp.

Few campsites in Botswana have as many animals and birds in and around the camp as Ihaha, and all 10 stands overlook the Chobe River.

Unfortunately the facilities have not been maintained over the last few years and there have been complaints of people crossing the river in mokoros to steal from campers. Make sure your valuables are locked away and don't leave your tent unmanned.

If you're worried about your safety at Ihaha, rather spend an extra night at Muchenje Campsite & Cottages, or in Kasane. You can still see the area around Ihaha as a day visitor.



STAY HERE

Ihaha is managed by **Kwalate Safaris**; see the sidebar on page 31.

DAY 11

Kasane

Kasane will feel like a metropolis after 10 days in the wilderness, but it's nice to sit down in a restaurant to eat a meal prepared by someone else for a change. (Not to mention sipping a cappuccino!) We like **The Coffee Buzz** for breakfast and coffee, **The Old House** (book beforehand for dinner) and **PPCC** – it's short for Pizza Plus Coffee & Curry; you can order anything here!

Kasane is spread out along the course of the Chobe River. Warthogs amble around the streets and it's not unusual to see hippos at night. In some parts of town – where a corridor provides access to the river – you might even see elephants and buffalo. Indeed, Kasane's charm is in the coexistence of man and animal.

There are supermarkets, banks and filling stations in town. Use today to stock your camping pantry, have your vehicle serviced if needed, and make bookings for activities for the next few days. Visit the historical baobab in front of the police station – it was used as a jail and a post office over the years.

If you camp at **Chobe Safari Lodge**, the shops are within walking distance. Kasane's neighbour is Kazungula, a border town where trucks pass through to Zimbabwe and Zambia. The Kazungula ferry is still used to transport vehicles across the Zambezi River from Botswana to Zambia – it's interesting to watch. A new border post and bridge are currently under construction and might be in use by the time you visit.



STAY HERE

Chobe Safari Lodge ☎ 00 267 625 0383

📍 underonebotswanasky.com

Thebe River Safaris ☎ 00 267 625 0995

📍 theberiversafaris.com



RESTAURANTS

The Coffee Buzz is on the same premises as Kalahari Tours, on the river side of the main road (President Avenue). Open every day from 8 am to 4 pm; they close earlier on Sundays if it's quiet. 📍 thecoffeebuzz.co.za
PPCC is in the main road, opposite the Spar complex. Open Monday to Saturday from 9 am to 10 pm; Sunday from 11 am to 9 pm. ☎ 00 267 625 2237

The Old House is next to the main road about 500 m east of the Spar complex. Open daily from 6.30 am to 9 pm. ☎ 00 267 625 2562; 📍 oldhousekasane.com



DAY 12

Kasane

Book a game drive to **Chobe National Park** – any of the lodges or campsites will arrange this outing. Some use their own vehicles and guides; others use a third party. You can explore the park on your own, but rather take the day off and let someone else do the driving. There's so much more excitement when you arrive at the park gate on the back of a game-viewing vehicle. What will you see? Bring a jacket because it's cold in the mornings.

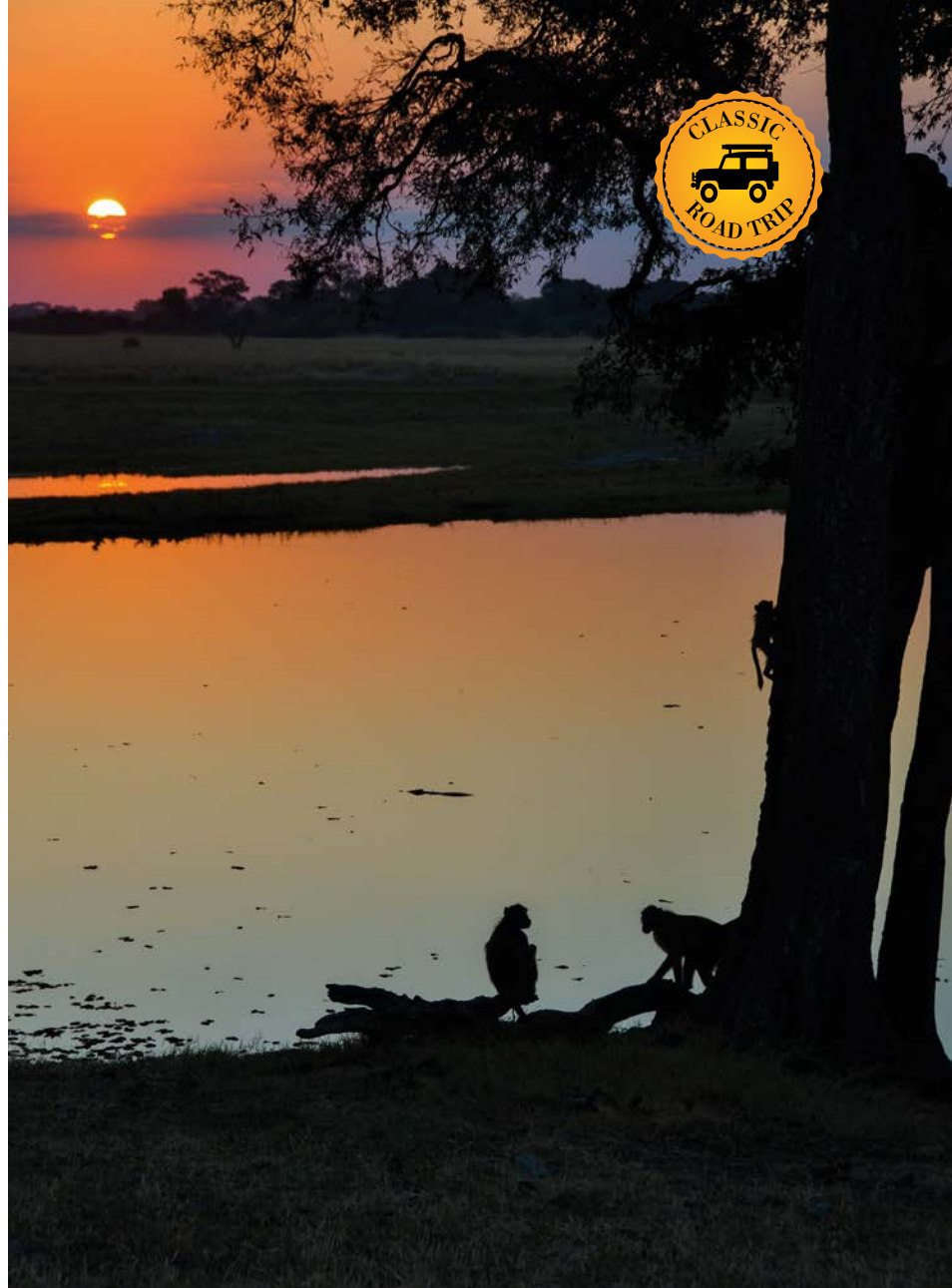
You'll follow a circular route from the gate to the riverbank and back, turning around after you've visited the **Serondela picnic site**. Lions are often seen around here. You should be back in Kasane by 11 am at the latest, just in time for brunch.

Relax and laze around in the afternoon until you go on a sunset cruise. A boat ride on the Chobe River is a unique experience. Where else can you sit in a camping chair with a beer or cooldrink in hand and watch elephants, buffalo and hippos go about their business?

DO THIS

Book game drives and river cruises at your lodge. Costs vary, but a three-hour game drive is about P295 per person and a three-hour river cruise is about P285 per person; discounts for children under 12. Park fees excluded.

Right: Even the baboons enjoy the sunset over the Chobe River. Baboons usually make for interesting subjects to photograph.



VICTORIA FALLS

If you've never been to Vic Falls, book a tour for Day 13. You can go in your own vehicle, but crossing the border is more complicated that way. (You'll have to pay border fees of R1 000 or more, for only one day in Zim.) Rather join an organised tour from Kasane – you'll be picked up where you're staying, accompanied over the border (all you need is your passport) and taken to the town of Victoria Falls, where you'll be dropped off at the waterfall.

You'll have three hours to see the falls – walk from one

spectacular viewpoint to the next. Bring a rain jacket and a towel to wrap around your camera.

Have lunch somewhere in town. Our pick is The Lookout Café, where the view is unparalleled – you look out over Batoka Gorge downstream, with the bridge over the Zambezi River rounding off the picture.

You'll be taken back to Kasane late in the afternoon.

Cost: About P780 per person. Most hotels or lodges can arrange a tour, which includes transport, but not lunch. Discounts for children under 12.



JOIN US ON TOUR!

If you'd rather travel in a group, join *go!* and Bhejane 4x4 Adventures on a tour of Moremi, Savuti and Chobe, in collaboration with Swampland Safari Trails. The nine-day tour costs R19 250 per person. Tours depart on 21 February 2021 and 22 March 2021. ☎ 044 535 9033
📧 bhejane.com

The bridges in Moremi Game Reserve are sometimes damaged, like First Bridge here. You will then have to find a way around it. Do not get out of your vehicle unless you're accompanied by an experienced guide.

DAY 13 Kasane

A good river cruise option for photographers is to go out on the water with **Pangolin Photo Safaris**. You'll be in a small boat with a swivel chair and a swivelling camera mount so your arms won't get tired. If you don't have a big camera and lens you can use Pangolin's equipment and keep the SD card with all your photos. The morning cruises are wonderfully quiet because most bigger boats go out in the afternoons. A photography guide will be onboard to help you with your camera settings and the captain knows where to find every kingfisher. You'll get amazing photos.

If you're travelling with kids, take them to the **CARACAL Centre**, where wild animals are rehabilitated. You can watch bushbabies being fed and there are warthogs, mongooses and maybe even vultures to see.

The Chobe River is part of Kasane's social scene. Even if you're staying in a campsite, do a "tour" of all the lodge decks. You can walk in at most lodges along the river and sit in the bar or restaurant overlooking the water. Our favourites include **Chobe Safari Lodge** and **Cresta Mowana Safari Resort & Spa**. Watch the boats, bring binos to look at birds, and enjoy your last hours in this wild, friendly place.

DO THIS

Pangolin Photo Safaris

A river cruise costs US\$130 per person and includes the use of a camera, an SD card with your photos, drinks and park fees. The good news is *go!* readers get 50% discount!

CARACAL Centre

Guided tour P65 per adult; half-price for children under 12; free for children under 6. It's on the western side of Kasane – ask for directions in town. Open daily from 9 am to 5 pm. 📧 caracal.info



4X4 DRIVING TIPS

You have to drive through water in Moremi, and through sand in Savuti. If you mainly use your 4x4 to park on the curb outside Woolies, keep these tips in mind:

WATER

- Determine how deep the water is. You can usually walk through, but not in areas where there are crocodiles.
- See if there are vehicle tracks leading into the water. If no one has done the crossing, it's a bad sign.
- Wait. The drivers of the local safari vehicles know the water crossings well. If you're patient, you can see where they drive and how deep the water is.



We can't mention it enough: A trip to Botswana is not complete without a river cruise. You'll see the landscape and the animals from a different perspective.

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

- Check where your engine's air intake is and make sure to avoid water that is deep enough to flow into the intake.
- Cover the grille of your vehicle with canvas to prevent water from washing into the nose.
- Remove your seatbelt and roll down your windows. If you underestimate the depth of the water and have to bail, you want to be able to get out of the vehicle as quickly as possible.
- Put your vehicle in second gear low range so you have enough power and momentum to power through the water.
- Maintain a steady speed in the water so that a bow wave forms in front of your vehicle. Stay behind the wave.

SAND

- The most important thing to do when driving in sand is to lower your tyre pressure to about 1.2 bar. Pack a good tyre pressure gauge – it's as important as your passport. A compressor to re-inflate your tyres is also recommended.
- Where possible, follow in the tracks of other vehicles.
- Don't accelerate or brake suddenly.
- If your vehicle gets stuck, there are a few things to try before you grab the shovel. Try to reverse out, lower your tyre pressure even more (you can go as low as 0.5 bar), or put rocks and branches under the tyres for extra traction (avoid sharp sticks). Pack a sand ladder or a winch to pull yourself free, or ask another vehicle to tow you out.

Money. Most camps and lodges list their rates in pula (some use US dollars), so the cost in rand will depend on the exchange rate. There are no shopping centres on the route between Maun and Kasane, but bring cash for park fees and other expenses. (The man selling firewood next to the road won't have a credit card machine...) At the time of going to print, the exchange rate was P1 = R1,50.

Firewood. Buy as much firewood as you can before you enter the national parks. Some campsites in the parks sell wood, but it will be expensive. You're not allowed to collect wood in the veld.

Fuel. Don't look at your map and let villages like Khwai, Mababe and Kavimba fool you – they're rural outposts, not bustling towns. The first place to refuel after Maun is the Puma filling station near Muchenje. Take at least four jerrycans, or more if you have space.

Food. You won't be able to buy food along the way, so buy enough supplies in Maun. Put away your fresh fruit when you're camping – it might attract elephants.

Communication. Even if you buy a SIM card in Botswana, you won't have any reception in the parks. That said, they're not so remote that you'll have to wait a week for help if you get stuck, but if you want extra peace of mind, hire a satellite phone. Contact Louis Milne from SwampLand Safari Trails – you can pick up the phone in Maun and drop it off in Kasane. You can also call him if you're stuck and need help. ☎ 00 267 71 23 4300; 🌐 swampland-safari.com

Best time to visit? Year-round. The wet season from November to March is best for birders. The floodwaters reach the Okavango Delta at the start of the dry season – there might not be any rain but there will be lots of water in Moremi. The best time to see game is just before the rainy season because the animals congregate around the waterholes, especially in Savuti.

Navigation. The main routes in the parks are easy to follow, but if you want to drive the smaller or seasonal roads, get Tracks4Africa on your GPS or take a good map along (like the maps in our Botswana guides).

Is it safe? All the campsites except Ihaha are safe from the perspective of people stealing your stuff – the same can't be said about baboons and monkeys. Lock your food away. Hyenas and even elephants will also swipe food. Remember, the camps are not fenced.

Children. We don't recommend travelling this route with young children. Predators like hyenas and wild dogs pose a threat. If you do take them along, make sure they always stay close to the tent and the campfire, and that they never walk to the ablution block without an adult.

Malaria. This is a malaria area so take precautions.

Water. Most campsites have running water, but bring drinking water just to be safe.

Light. Make sure you have torches and headlamps.